


Planning Your Next Contingency Contracting Deployment

LTC David Blevins



As a Staff Officer with Joint Force Headquarters-Florida (JFHQ-FL), I am assigned to the 53rd Infantry Brigade (Inf Bde) in support of *Operation Enduring Freedom*. In the short time this unit has been preparing for deployment, the Brigade's Soldiers have greatly impressed me with their dedication, morale and motivation. These young Soldiers are our Army's future, and our future is in good hands.

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) ensures that Guard contracting teams receive all training necessary to execute missions around the world, including this 2004 relief mission providing tarps to a hurricane-ravaged area of North Carolina. (U.S. Army photo by Jonas Jordan.)

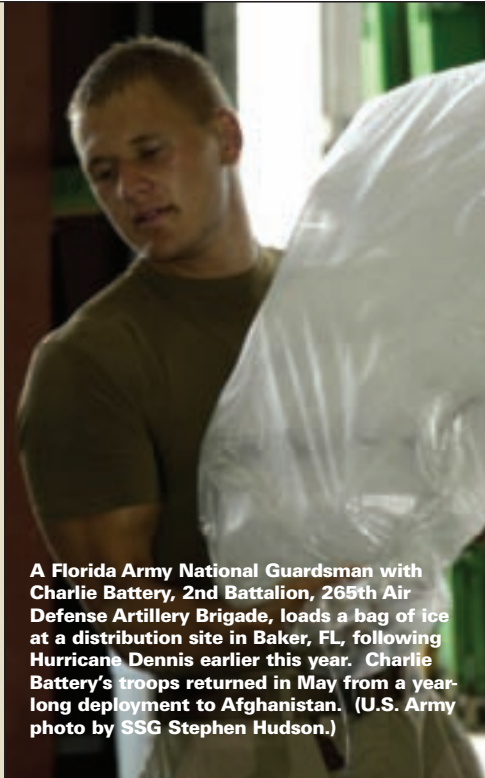
As mobilization began, the Florida National Guard's senior leaders ensured the necessary resources were made available to properly prepare our Soldiers for mobilization station requirements. The medical screening process was rigorous and helped determine the unit's Soldiers' overall physical and emotional condition and general well being. Likewise, the Family Support program provided several home station activities for the deploying Soldiers' families.

The 53rd Inf Bde was mobilized to Camp Shelby, MS, for pre-deployment requirements April 4, 2005. Mobilization Center Shelby provided superior training for the Brigade's Soldiers. The training was challenging, on target and prepared our Infantrymen for their upcoming deployment.

One challenge we ran into was preparing to deploy our 4-person contracting team into theater — there were no slots on the Brigade's Joint Manning Document (JMD). NGB and theater requirements indicated a need for six contracting personnel.

The Brigade identified two slots in its S-4 section and two slots in the Support Battalion to handle the unit's contracting requirements. This obviously had an adverse effect on the Brigade's contracting requirements. From my view, this issue could be resolved by allocating six contracting positions on the JMD. This initiative must be taken at levels above brigade.

Another area of concern was the availability of qualified federal contracting personnel. Our contracting team consisted of an E-7 and E-5, both highly qualified in federal contracting



A Florida Army National Guardsman with Charlie Battery, 2nd Battalion, 265th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, loads a bag of ice at a distribution site in Baker, FL, following Hurricane Dennis earlier this year. Charlie Battery's troops returned in May from a year-long deployment to Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Stephen Hudson.)

procedures, and an O-5 and E-9 with no federal contracting experience. However, the less experienced Soldiers did have extensive nonfederal contracting experience. The NGB did a remarkable job in coordinating for and ensuring that our contracting team received the maximum training opportunities available given our deployment time constraints.

If contracting requirements for units notified for deployment were known well in advance, steps could be taken to identify personnel and training requirements. This process would allow for more training time and ensure the necessary training resources would be in place. Since contracting personnel will be

required on all future deployment rotations, coordinated action should be taken at the earliest opportunity to establish deployment-ready contracting

teams. A possible solution would be to rely more heavily on DOD civilian contracting personnel who have the real-world expertise to execute contingency contracting missions.

Pre-deployment coordination with the Head of Contracting Activities (HCA) in the theater of operations is an absolute necessity. The HCA needs to know the capabilities and expertise of contracting personnel reporting to theater. Advance coordination allows the HCA to position contracting personnel to best support operational mission requirements.

When I'm not in uniform, I work full time for the State of Florida Department of Military Affairs. Before being mobilized, I was the Deputy to the State Resource Manager for the State Quartermaster. On the military side, I'm a Finance Officer. I have extensive knowledge of state contracting procedures and have been actively involved with purchasing and contracting support for numerous operations, including hurricanes and wild fires. When the 53rd Inf Bde was alerted for mobilization, I requested assignment through the JFHQ-FL mobilization cell as a contingency contracting officer (CCO). To this point, the experience has been very challenging, but extremely rewarding professionally.

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